

## 22ND ANNUAL NATIONAL FOLK FESTIVAL

SARAH GERTRUDE KNOTT

The 22nd annual National Folk Festival took place in Oklahoma City June 26-29 as a part of the Oklahoma Semi Centennial Celebration. More than a thousand folk dancers and singers from 20 states were on hand; and Oklahoma which were held in several areas of the state preliminary ma set its share of talent assembled at small festivals

Cyclones, floods, winds, hails, storms and almost freezing weather which had plagued the entire state and region suddenly ended just the day before the Festival's gala opening at the bandshell and out came the hottest and most glaring sun that ever shone on the wind swept plains of the Sooner state; however, that sun in all its fury could not dent the spirit of National Folk Festival participants. It was truly old home week for old participants; so contagious was the gaiety and fellowship feeling that those who came to join us for the first time, were caught up in the prevailing spirit that always makes a gathering of folk dancers and singers a genuine human experience.

There are those who have always said that there should be no charge for folk festivals; there are those who think a festival in out of place on a city stage. They would have been pleased this year, because the Oklahoma Semi Centennial Commission and Exposition and the University of Oklahoma, our sponsors made it possible for us to have the Festival without charge; and the situation and existing conditions at the fairgrounds where the Semi Centennial Exposition was held made it imperative that the Festival take place in the Bandshell, right across from the midway and the Grandstand and where Johnny Ray held forth. Be it said that we even conquered the situation to the extent that even Johnny Ray said that the powers that be volunteered the information that they had the wrong show in the Grandstand since our simple, an sometimes elaborate and colorful program drew more customers than any other "show" on the fairgrounds, in spite of sun, and noise conditions which differed greatly from those in which we ordinarily find ourselves.

We were long on songs this year... it was a "singing year", I do believe from reports of others as well as from my own experience that in the case in many places. Part of the situation which faced us this year, may be due to the fact Oklahoma and the area round-about is definitely a square dance state and area; certain ethnic dances of newer groups just do not exist to any great extent as they do in Chicago and other centers in the Midwest.

Then the fact that the National Folk Festival was held in June instead of April as usual — June month when most groups are vacationing — made a difference, I believe; but certain other factors make me wonder if there is not a let down from the interest and enthusiasm in the number of ethnic centres where there was much activity several years after World War II.

We found several fiddlers in Oklahoma; a number of dance bands because live music is the order of the day much more than in Missouri, and some of the states we know about. We met Marion Unger, fiddler-Violinist who knows more about fiddle tunes than almost anyone in the country, and has the best collection of distinctive Oklahoma and other tunes; we also found the largest collection of Oklahoma British Ballads and folk songs, and many who still know these songs throughout the state. The collection is now made by Chauncey and Ethel Moore of Tulsa. It is now at the University of Oklahoma press — soon to be published, we hope. Neither of these two collectors, and a number of others working independently in

Oklahoma, had met one another. There is no folklore society, and there was no festival movement in the state until we started stirring around in Oklahoma 4 months ago.

As the program at the Bandshell, the opening night was one of the very most colorful and exciting programs we have had at all, I think. It was our best from the standpoint of the spectator who was looking at the festival from the "show" standpoint; and at the same time it was just as real as the others which were not as dashing, but showed the simple, down to earth kinds of Folk songs, dances and more quiet kinds of folklore which are a very definite part of the picture, of course.

The opening night program ended with the Mariachis of Old Mexico; it included Nelda Linsey Drury's group from San Antonio, and her new, good looking husband; also there was a large combined group of handbell ringers from six states; English and Southern Appalachian dancers from the Stuart Robinson Highland School, Blackey, Ky, brought by our old friend W. L. Cooper; Negro spiritual singers — a large choral group from Oklahoma City; a fine Schottish Piper Band from Springfield Mo., Oklahoma square dancers; fiddle bands, ballad singers and other individuals and groups too numerous to mention.

Naturally, the Indian part of the program was stronger than usual; part was given by old Plains tribes friends; but we had some new kinds of Indian music and dances by tribes who had never been on Festival programs of who had not given their songs and dances outside their own tribal headquarters; the Creek Green Corn dance, was something we shall all remember long and the Comanche cure songs, and prayer song for protection "the Hackberry Song", made us all take notice of something in Indian music that is lovely and meaningful; but is not connected with dance.

This year's Festival made me know for sure that folk dances, songs, customs and other lore — these handed down traditionally for a long period of time, have strength and power that can not be quickly learned; I am more than ever convinced that there is a real job in holding what we still have alive and kicking — but waning; a lot of traditional heritages can still be saved, if we wake up and get busy while there is still time — if we all work together.

But it was lonesome without you and the Lithuanians and all our Chicago and other friends you usually brought before you "went west". Don't let these absences happen again Vyts. We need you and yours.

### ~~~~~ KOLO WEEK 1956

The fifth annual Kolo Festival in San Francisco was surely the most ambitious undertaking thus far by Bay area kolo enthusiasts, or perhaps by any kolo group in the country. The rapid growth of the Kolo Festival from small beginnings, just five years ago, to a week long round of activities covering nearly all aspects of Yugoslav culture has been due simply to the tremendous, astonishing response of large numbers of people to kolos. Granted that the leadership of such teachers as Vyts Beliajus, John Filcich, Dick Crum, and Anatol Joukowsky has been inspired; nevertheless, only the enthusiasm of the dancers themselves can account for the phenomenal growth of kolo activities. Recognition of Bay interest in kolos and Balkan dancing has even come from Mayor George Christopher who proclaimed November 18-25 Balkan-Kolo Week in San Francisco.

The Oakland audience who watched the kick-off of this year's Kolo Festival on Sunday, November 18, 1956, with the performance of "KOLO (in capital letters) iz Beograd" was certainly one of the most appreciative of the

Yugoslav group's tour. All of us are now reliving that experience through the LP's that John Filcich made of the entire performance that day. A high point were the dances from Baranja which received such an ovation that the leader threw his hat into the air with a whoop while the dancers responded to the applause and cries of "Opet!" by doing an enchoire for us. The KOLO group was followed by the parties and after-parties that kolo lovers seem to thrive on. A wonderful addition to the Sat. after-party at Madelyne Greene's studio was a performance of the Warrior Dance from Rugovo (as learned by Don Landauer from KOLO) by Don Landauer and Dick Slater armed with yardsticks along with tupan-player Gordy Engler beating a drum with a wooden spoon. The traditional Thanksgiving kolo party had live music played by the "Ruža" tamburitza orchestra, and on Saturday night the Hajduks with their pretty Serbian singer, Evelyn Jokola, arrived from Los Angeles to play for the big Kolo Festival dance.

The Kolo Institute on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday included instruction in Yugoslav background and Serbo-Croatian language by Andrie Simic, kolo fest with Bob Gakovich, kolo films, and an institute of Balkan dances taught by Anatol Joukowsky, John Filcich, and 3 young teachers from L. A. area, Lani Papadol, Ruby Pritchard, and Gordon Engler, with Armenian dances by Frances Ajoian. The dance material was excellent and well taught. The background presented by Anatol Joukowsky on the challenging Bulgarian Rachenitsa was as fascinating as the dance itself. Rachenitsa proved a challenge to even the most able dancers. Although Mr. J. himself received the White Star from the king of Bulgaria for dancing the Rachenitsa, in his own words: "I drop dead twelve times before I can dance the Rachenitsa next to one Bulgarian mountain boy." Let Mr. J.'s modest estimation of his own dancing ability be a model for all of us. Of the new material presented, each dance offered unlimited opportunities for learning.

Ruby Pritchard taught Ballos, a charming Greek couple dance researched by Dick Crum and Gordon Engler reviewed another of Dick's more difficult dances, the Ardeleana cu Figuri, with its slightly off-beat 7/8 rhythm and men's show-off figures. Girls in the Bay area are still working on the deceptively simple Bride's Dance taught by Lani Papadol, a dance that will be remembered as part of the repertoire of "Tanec". Lani blushed in confusion when, immediately after she had finished teaching the Macedonian girl's dance, John Filcich revealed that the people sitting on the stage were all members of the San Francisco Macedonian colony; but the Macedonians themselves really clapped their approval of Lani's teaching.

Later in the evening the same Macedonians were sitting on the sidelines to watch the dancing, and some of the gentlemen joined in the singing of "Sto Mi Je Milo Em Drago" as few folk dancers could sing it. One of the men turned to me and said simply, "It's a very old song... very old." That comment made me realize that the Yugoslavs have loved these songs and dances for centuries and it shows only intensity on the part of folk dancers to feel that after a year or six months they have exhausted a particular dance and are ready to discard it.

Another memorable moment was watching Mrs. Dorothy Moskoff and her daughter lead Kostursko Oro which had been presented by John Filcich as he had learned it from Mrs. Moskoff's 70-year old mother, Mrs. Sveta Kosta, a native of Greek Macedonia. This beautiful oro, simple, yet with a fine degree of subtlety, is a sort of dance classic. One can dance its slow, walking movements over and over without losing any of its fascination.

Probably the most significant quality of Balkan dance

is that paradoxical combination of simple and subtle; songs of only one unforgettable musical phrase repeated over with slight modulations, dance with the same, simple, yet arresting step throughout; and performed, moreover, as the peasants do them, fifteen minutes at a time... a repetitiveness, which does not seem to detract, but somehow adds a peculiarly hypnotic quality. It has brought an entirely different dance concept, which replaces "choreography" with that of "style". As is said of a writer, "the style is the man", one might say of kolos, "the style is the dance".

Behind the scenes of this year's Kolo Festival was an energetic, hard working committee, who quietly performed most of the drudgery involved in such an undertaking. They deserve commendation for biting off a tremendous hunk of festival, and for proving again that kolo is not so much a dance as a spirit, symbolized by the original meaning of kolo, "wheel" or "circle". The Kolo Festivals with their communal feeling and "hooleyeh" have opened a whole new world of folk dancing.

Suzanne Jenkinns

## The Dubrovnik Summer Festival

July 1st through August 31st marked the dates of the Dubrovnik Summer Festival when visitors from all over Yugoslavia and the world, come to join in the festivities in this old historic city. Perhaps no where in all of Yugoslavia can be found a city with so much historical significance and yet so much modern appeal for the traveler.

The history of Dubrovnik as a city dates back to the 7th century when the entire Dalmatian coast became a center of importance to merchants, pilgrims and travelers. Dubrovnik's strategic position on the Adriatic coast made her a formidable fortress which many countries through the ages tried to acquire for themselves. Dubrovnik's defiance against Byzantium, the Venetians, Hungarians and the Turks is an example for her desire to remain free. Dubrovnik, like many cities along the Adriatic, is completely encircled by a huge wall — fortifications against aggressors.

During this eighth year of the Dubrovnik Summer Festival, a diversified program of drama, instrumental concerts, opera, ballet and folklore attracted thousands of people from every part of the world. Such programs as Prince Igor, Don Quixote, Othello, Hamlet, Macbeth, Swan Lake and various Yugoslav national orchestras and folk dance ensembles were truly worthy choices for a sensational festival.

One of the highlights of the Dubrovnik Festival is the presentation of Hamlet at Fort Lovrjenac (Laurence). According to legend, Venice in the 10th century planned to erect on a cliff overlooking Dubrovnik, a fortress that that would dominate a major portion of the East Adriatic coast. The people of Dubrovnik, learning of these plans, erected on this very same spot, the fort of Lovrjenac within a span of three days. From that day on Lovrjenac became a staunch guardian of Dubrovnik's freedom and in later years was to play another major role — that of a natural setting for the presentation of Shakespeare's Hamlet. The fort's natural terrace and architectural beauty make it a unique open air theatre where Hamlet can be performed without the aid of artificial props.

In the folklore section, The Ensemble of Serbian Folk Dancers and Singers, "KOLO" and the Ensemble of Croatian folk dancers and singers "LADO" presented magnificent displays of Yugoslav national songs and dances. KOLO has already toured the United States, while Lado is planning for an American tour in the near future. LADO's selection of dances from Vrljka, Slavonia, Posavina, Prigorje, Valpovo, and Baranja were indeed, appealing and exciting.